

Assessment of Philosophical Approaches to Physical Activity Needs of the Elderly for Sustainable Healthy Ageing Promotion by Health Educators in Enugu State

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Abstract

Sustainable healthy ageing promotion (SHAP) is a reliable public health initiative that encompasses different components of health promotion measures including physical activity. The SHAP is an essential tool for promoting the quality of life in old age. This paper investigated the appropriateness of philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP by health educators in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Using convenience sampling procedure, a total of 150 respondents were studied. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. Mean scores, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and t-Test were used for data analysis. The findings showed that majority of the respondents were females 80(53%), had above 10 years of teaching experience 85(57%) and had Masters Degree 90(60%) as highest educational qualification. The study further revealed that health educators in Enugu State considered philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP appropriate ($2.68 \pm 0.111 > 2.50$). Also, no significant differences were observed with regard to gender; and highest educational qualification while difference existed on year of teaching experience ($p < 0.05$). In old age, achieving sustainable healthy ageing is dependent on many factors including philosophical approaches to physical activity needs as considered by health educators.

Keywords: Ageing promotion, sustainability, elderly, philosophy, health educators

Introduction

Sustainable healthy ageing promotion (SHAP) is a reliable public health initiative that encompasses different components of health promotion measures including physical activity, for the purpose of promoting the quality of life in old age (Ugwu, 2016a). This understanding agrees with the assertion that natural ageing is usually accompanied with multiple health problems such as over/under weight, osteoporosis, joint/ back pains, slipped disc, loss of balance and strength, muscle cramps that needs to be managed and controlled (Ugwu, 2016b). A good number of studies have considered and further recommended physical activity as a veritable tool in the control and management of health problems in old age (Telles, Naveen, Balkrishna & Kumar, 2010; Nguyen, Grzywacz, Lang, Walkup, & Arcury, 2010). As a result, this recommendation suggests that physical activity should form an integral part of the elderly needs if healthy ageing should be attained.

Evidence of the outstanding health benefits of engaging in physical activity in old age abound. For instance, previous studies shows that participating in physical activity improve muscle strength (Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009; Bosch, Traustadottir, Howard, & Matt, 2009); cardiovascular health (Innes, Bourguignon & Taylor, 2005); walking and balance (DiBenedetto, Innes, Taylor, Rodeheaver, Boxer, Wright, & Kerrigan, 2005; Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009); cardio-respiratory functions (Ofuebe, Ugwu & Ene, 2017); enhanced blood pressure (Yogendra, Yogendra, Ambardekar, Lele, Shetty, Dave, & Husein, 2004); functioning of body systems (Bosch et al., 2009; Donesky-Cuenco, Nguyen, Paul, & Carrieri-Kohlman, 2009; Skoro-Kondza, Tai, Gadelrab, Drincevic, & Greenhalgh, 2009; Telles, Naveen, Balkrishna & Kumar, 2010) and quality of sleep (Manjunath & Telles, 2005; Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009). The above indications demonstrate that

participation in physical activity in old age is very crucial and thus should be encouraged based on philosophical considerations particularly from the health promotion perspectives.

Contextually, philosophy can be seen as a systematic study of concepts such as truth, reality, reason and logic, ethics and morality, justice, beauty and good or a search for general understanding of values and reality. According to Van Der, Pepijn and Jan (2012), philosophy provides a framework for broad issues and tasks such as sustainable healthy ageing promotion. In this study, the philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly are logically embedded in some schools of thought such as: progressivism; reconstructivism; experimentalism; pragmatism; functionalism; interventionism; and restorationism. These schools of thought were adapted in the construct of the study instrument and also used to establish the appropriateness of physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP by health promotion professionals.

Given that the current research is among the studies (Birdee, Legedza, Saper, Bertisch, Eisenberg, & Philips, 2008; Skoro-Kondza, Tai, Gadelrab, Drincevic, & Greenhalgh, 2009; Nguyen, Grzywacz, Lang, Walkup, & Arcury, 2010) applying descriptive approach based on philosophical approaches to establish the appropriateness of the physical activity needs of the elderly, health educators were deemed most suitable for the study. Health educators are trained health promotion experts with wider knowledge and experiences on the application of physical activity in improving the quality of life. Also, studies have shown health benefits of participating in physical activity among the elderly (DiBenedetto et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2009; Bosch et al., 2009; Donesky-Cuenca et al., 2009; Skoro-Kondza, Tai, Gadelrab, Drincevic, & Greenhalgh, 2009; Telles, Naveen, Balkrishna & Kumar, 2010; Ofuebe, Ugwu & Ene, 2017). Literature shows that there are indications that no study of this kind exists elsewhere and thus making the present study unique. Therefore, the researchers deemed it crucial to fill this gap.

Aim

The study was set to investigate the appropriateness of philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP by health educators in Enugu State and further verify the null hypotheses of no significant differences within variables of gender, years of teaching experience, and highest educational qualification at 0.05 level of significance.

Methods

Design and Population

The study was based on descriptive research design, conducted among health educators in Enugu State. The state, area of the study, is one of the 36 states of the country that is conducive for quality education and welfare of her retirees. The population for the study comprised of all the health educators in educational institutions in the state totaling 250 individuals.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 150 health educators was selected from three major educational institutions via: universities; schools of health technology; and colleges of education respectively. These institutions constituted three clusters (cluster sampling techniques). Using convenience sampling procedure, a total of 50 respondents were selected from each of the clusters. This process yielded 150 respondents used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection primarily relied on researcher-designed questionnaire as the only instrument for eliciting information for the study. The questionnaire titled "Philosophically-Based Physical Activity Needs Questionnaire -PANQ" was written in English Language and could be completed in approximately fifteen minutes. The "PANQ" has two sections: A and B. Section A contained information on sample characteristics, while section B elicited data on the philosophically-based physical activity needs of the elderly. These two sections (A&B) were bundled into one study package for the convenience of the respondents. The items of the "PANQ" were properly designed to allow responses from the respondents without any bias. The instrument yielded a strong internal consistency of 0.81.

Method of Data Collection

Prior to the study, the researchers established a healthy rapport with the Heads of Administration in each of the sampled educational institutions. This rapport paved way for the researchers to approach the respondents in their respective offices. The copies of the questionnaire were successfully administered on respondents through

the help of three research assistants selected from each of the sampled educational institutions. The research assistants were briefed on the modalities for the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents. The health educators who agreed to participate in the study received a questionnaire package containing a consent letter, the purpose of the research, the respondent's right, and the researchers' address. In the questionnaire, greater emphasis was placed on the anonymity of respondents as the responses were purely for the purpose of the study. Also, the confidentiality of the respondents was guaranteed. No financial compensation was provided to the respondents for participating. The potential respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire and return to the researchers or the assistants on the spot. This process aided in recording a very high return rate (95%).

Statistical Procedure

The returned copies of the questionnaire were thoroughly cross-checked for completeness of information and were coded into statistical software (Statistical Package for Social Science [SPSS] version 21) for analysis. Mean scores, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and t-Test statistical tools were used to analyze the data. The criterion mean value of 2.50 accrued from the four-point response options was used for decision, thus, any item that weighs 2.50 and above implied that the philosophically-based physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP was appropriate while any item below 2.50 signified inappropriate. The statistical significance was determined at $P < 0.05$.

Result

Table 1: Sample Characteristics [N = 150]

Demographics	f	%
Gender		
Male	70	[47]
Female	80	[53]
Year of Teaching Experience		
Below 10 years	65	[43]
Above 10 years	85	[57]
Highest Educational Qualification		
B. Sc/ Masters	90	[60]
Doctorate	60	[40]
<i>f = frequency</i>		
<i>% = percentage</i>		

Results in Table 1 showed the sample characteristics. All the respondents were health educators from Enugu State, Nigeria. A total of 150 of health educators responded to the questionnaire items. Only the properly filled copies were used for the data analyses. Majority of the respondents 80(53%) were females while 70(47%) were males. About 65(43%) of them had below 10 years of teaching experiences while a greater proportion 85(57%) had above 10 years. The respondents who had Doctorate degree were 60(40%) while 90(60%) had B.Sc/Masters Degree as their highest educational qualification respectively.

Table 2: Appropriateness of philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP by health educators (N=142)

Parameters	Mean ± SD	Remark
1. Progressivism; which entails gradual build-up of exercise starting with the duration of 5 to 10 minutes and later progresses to form the basis for attaining healthy ageing.	2.73 ± 0.041	Appropriate
2. Reconstructivism; which emphasizes self realization as a means through which an elderly person can change his/her way of life and engage in a particular lifetime sports such as swimming, tennis, golf, badminton, that will promote health.	2.82 ± 0.307	Appropriate
3. Experimentalism; which emphasizes the importance of experimentation, implementation and practices of different forms of exercises such as jogging, cycling, etc. capable of improving health in old age.	2.55 ± 0.018	Appropriate

4. Pragmatism; which involves the practical approach to physical activities such as stretching the joints, muscles and the nerves for at least 5 to 10 minutes before bathing through natural process.	2.33 ± 0.021	Inappropriate
5. Functionalism; which emphasizes that functional health should be reflected in all the activities of the elderly.	2.65 ± 0.309	Appropriate
6. Interventionism; which describes the practices or activities such as early morning sit-up on daily basis for at least 10 minutes per a day for the improving musculoskeletal functions.	2.90 ± 0.020	Appropriate
7. Restorationism; which describes movement, actions or practices involved in restoring/ bringing functional health to its original state through appropriate physical exercises such as jogging, rope skipping, early morning sit-up, stretches, cycling etc.	2.75 ± 0.061	Appropriate
Grand Mean	2.68 ± 0.111	Appropriate

Keys:

SD = Standard Deviation

n = Number of Respondents

Overall, the health educators considered the philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP appropriate ($2.68 \pm 0.111 > 2.50$). Specifically, the respondents considered that all the schools of thought: Progressivism (2.73 ± 0.041); Reconstructivism (2.82 ± 0.307); Experimentalism (2.55 ± 0.018); Functionalism (2.65 ± 0.309); Interventionism (2.90 ± 0.020); and Restorationism (2.75 ± 0.061) appropriate except Pragmatism (2.33 ± 0.021) for SHAP of the elderly (*Table 2*).

Table 3: Demographic differences in the assessment of philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP (N = 142).

Parameter	Variables	N	Mean ± SD	Status	P-value	Remark
Gender	Male	67	2.24 ± 0.21	Inappropriate	0.601	Accepted
	Female	75	2.76 ± 0.10	Appropriate		
YTE	Below 10	60	2.58 ± 0.30	Appropriate	0.012	Rejected
	Above 10	82	2.42 ± 0.09	Inappropriate		
HEQ	B.Sc/Master	87	2.81 ± 0.01	Appropriate	0.308	Accepted
	Doctorate	55	2.19 ± 0.03	Inappropriate		

Keys:

YTE = Years of Teaching Experience

HEQ = Highest Educational Qualification

SD = Standard Deviation

n = Number of Respondents

Data in Table 3 showed the demographic differences in the mean response scores of the health educators on the philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP. Specifically, the females ($2.76 \pm 0.10 > 2.50$); those having below 10 years of teaching experience ($2.58 \pm 0.30 > 2.50$); and respondents with B.Sc/ Masters Degree ($2.81 \pm 0.01 > 2.50$) considered the phenomenon appropriate while the males ($2.24 \pm 0.21 < 2.50$); those above 10 years of teaching experiences ($2.42 \pm 0.09 < 2.5$); and respondents with doctorate degree ($2.19 \pm 0.03 < 2.5$) did not respectively. Statistically, no significant difference was observed with regards to gender ($p=0.601 > 0.05$); and highest educational qualification ($p=0.308 > 0.05$) while difference existed on year of teaching experience ($p=0.012 < 0.05$).

Discussion

This study presents evidence on the appropriateness of philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP. The study finding showed that health educators in Enugu State considered the philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP appropriate. Interestingly, this finding demonstrates great concern and showed similarity with previous scholars on the quality of life in old age (Rolan, Jakobi & Jones, 2011). A good number of positive implications for health promotion and education can be deduced from the study findings. Firstly, the quality of health and physical performance in old age is usually measured by

the ability of an elderly person to function optimally and independently in carrying out all the activities of daily living such as bathing, sweeping, transferring, , sweeping, toileting, dressing, washing and cooking (Ugwu, Ugwueze, & Ene, 2016). These great expectations constitute integral components of healthy ageing, which are mostly undermined by the ageing-related multiple health problems (Ugwu, 2016b). Also, from empirical perspectives, physical activity has attracted numerous research attentions from different disciplines in the quest to define its positive impact and health promotion benefits in all ages. Indeed, some studies considered physical activity as a highly recommended and veritable tool in enhancing walking and balance (DiBenedetto, Innes, Taylor, Rodeheaver, Boxer, Wright, & Kerrigan, 2005; Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009); improving muscle strength (Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009; Bosch, Traustadottir, Howard, & Matt, 2009); promoting physical performance and functional ability (Ugwu, Ugwueze, & Ene, 2016). Secondly, from educational perspectives, physical activity and education are inseparable entities. For instance, education provides a conducive atmosphere for effective physical activity programme to be carried out, and also serves as a vehicle for change and positive transformation in every society. Of great importance is also the report that physical activity improved cardio-respiratory functions in elderly (DiBenedetto, Innes, Taylor, Rodeheaver, Boxer, Wright, & Kerrigan, 2005; Ofuebe, Ugwu & Ene, 2017).

The results of the study indicated that majority of the respondents were females, had below 10 years of teaching experience and B.Sc/ Masters Degrees. Based on the educational qualifications of the respondents, it could be argued that health educators had deeper understanding of all the elements that constitute the physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP. This is quite encouraging. The findings equally varied within variables as observed in female respondents, those below 10 years of teaching experience and respondents with B.Sc/ Masters Degree qualification. It was quite surprising that those who had below 10 years of teaching experience considered the philosophical approaches to physical activity needs of the elderly for SHAP appropriate while their counterparts did not. One of the implications of this finding remains that years of experience did not impact on the understanding and responses of the respondents. Furthermore, no significant differences were observed with regard to gender; and highest educational qualification while a significant difference existed in the year of teaching experience in reference to the assessment of the philosophical approaches. These variations on the appropriateness of the phenomenon within variables could be attributed to the respondents' understanding. Also, the role of education cannot be overemphasized and might have greatly influenced their responses too. Consistent with other studies, the present findings showed variations within variables (Chen, Chen, Chao, Hung, Lin, & Li, 2009; Ugwu, Ugwueze & Ene, 2016; Ugwu, 2016b; Ofuebe, Ugwu & Ene, 2017).

The outcome of this study presents both practical and theoretical implications. In terms of practice, health experts including health educators should design evidence-based interventions for the elderly using the philosophical approaches explored in this study. With respect to theory, there is need to explore the theoretical underpinning of the outlined philosophical approaches/ paradigms and their relevance to health promotion and education programmes for the elderly. However, we therefore, suggest that further studies adopting different designs such as longitudinal, random control trials and cohort studies, with wider scope and additional variables such as religious affiliation, be carried out by other researchers.

Conclusion

In old age, achieving sustainable healthy ageing is dependent on many factors including philosophical approaches to physical activity needs as considered by health educators. The responses of the male health educators as well as those who had above 10 years of teaching experience with regard to the phenomenon were not encouraging. This suggests that appropriate measures such as seminars, workshops, etc be put in place to enhance quality knowledge and understanding regarding indicators of SHAP. There is need for constructive and collaborative efforts by individuals, government and non-governmental agencies in enhancing and sustaining healthy ageing promotion programmes for the elderly in general. Also, healthcare professionals should encourage active participation in physical activity by older persons. This, no doubt, would serve as positive step to sustaining healthy ageing.

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